



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 18, 2003

CONTACT:

MICHELLE MOWERY JOHNSON
(615) 313-4707 (OFFICE)
(615) 272-0845 (PAGER)

TENNESSEE REHABILITATION CENTER GRADUATES OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACHIEVE INDEPENDENCE

MORE THAN 90 TENNESSEANS GRADUATE TO A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE

SMYRNA, Tenn. — The students hail from all across Tennessee—from Arlington to Antioch, Crossville to Castalian Springs, Waynesboro to Whitehouse. And now, after spending many months at the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center (TRC) in Smyrna, more than 90 young men and women with significant disabilities are ready to go back home and begin a new, more independent life. They are graduating from TRC on Friday, December 19.

The new graduates took advantage of the diverse programs offered at TRC, including Building Maintenance, Business Education Training, Food Service, Custodial Training and Warehouse Training.

TRC's mission is to provide comprehensive rehabilitation services in a positive and productive learning environment. Services provided assist individuals in achieving their highest level of functioning so they can live and work as independently as possible.

The Tennessee Rehabilitation Center is a state-operated comprehensive rehabilitation facility. It is one of only nine such centers in the nation. Services are provided on campus, and the majority of clients live on site while receiving services. The length of programs offered at TRC vary, depending upon the individual client's interest, abilities and needs. TRC is part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

TRC serves more than 1,000 disabled Tennesseans each year. Since opening its doors in 1977, TRC has served more than 25,000 disabled individuals. One of those individuals is Darryl Miller.

Miller was injured in 1994 after falling from a tree he was trimming. The results were devastating. His spinal cord was damaged, resulting in quadriplegia at the C5-6 level. Miller became totally dependent upon family and friends. He could no longer work at shoeing horses, a job he loved and had been doing for 13 years.

Following hospitalization and a period of rehabilitation at a Nashville rehabilitation center, Miller entered the Physical Rehabilitation Program at TRC in Smyrna. He made progress in his therapies, but was unable to reach his goal of maximum independence. After several years of ups and downs, Miller came back to TRC in May of 2003, more determined than ever before to reach his maximum potential in physical independence.

-more-

CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37248
615.313.4700

He worked harder than ever in his therapies. He was open to any type of adaptive equipment that would help him to become more independent. Miller was fitted with a power wheelchair and can go nearly anywhere he wants to without assistance.

"I have come a long way this time," says Darryl Miller. "The services I have received at TRC have changed my life. Staff have pushed me to do more, which has enabled me to become stronger mentally and physically."

It has taken Darryl Miller nine years to adjust to his disability and prepare himself mentally and physically to return to work activities. Now, he says, "I'm ready. My whole life revolved around horses, and I want to get back into the business. If I can't shoe horses again, I can sell supplies and equipment to others who can."

For Darryl Miller, his graduation from TRC on December 19 brings closure to a process of fully adjusting to his disability and maximizing his independence. Graduation from TRC also opens another door for Darryl in realizing his dream of starting his own business selling horseshoe equipment and supplies. He has met with wholesale suppliers of horseshoe equipment and supplies, horse owners, and the current people who shoe horses in the Shelbyville area, all who encouraged him to get his business started.

"I'm ready to go to work," says Darryl Miller. "I know the horseshoe business. I am very familiar with horseshoe equipment and supplies. I know everyone in the horse and horseshoeing business, and I'm moving to Shelbyville, "the Walking Horse Capital of the World". I now feel I have it all together, and I'm ready to make my dream come true."

Sometimes, you have to wait on your dreams; sometimes your dreams wait on you.

For more information about TRC, the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Tennessee Department of Human Services, visit www.state.tn.us/humanserv

###